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CHRISTIAN
UNION.

CHRISTIAN UNION.

CHRISTIAN UNION:

SIX ADDRESSES

Delivered at the First Meeting of the Paddington Ministerial Union,

REV. HENRY FRY, D.D.

CHAIRMAN,

BY THE

REV. W. CHALMERS, M.A., *Presbyterian.*
REV. HENRY FRY, D.D., *Church of England.*
REV. W. G. LEWIS, *Baptist.*
REV. A. McMILLAN, *Congregational.*
REV. A. C. PRICE, B.A., *Church of England.*
REV. C. G. SCOTT, *Presbyterian.*

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Church of England.

INTRODUCTION.

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It is hoped that the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the testimony of experience has awakened in the Church of Christ a deep interest in the subject of the following Addresses. To those whose hearts sympathize with our Redeemer's prayer, the union of a body of Ministers of the different Christian communions, will, of itself, be a subject of thankfulness and hope. It is believed that "THE SCRIPTURAL UNION OF CHRISTIANS" will be found to have been treated very fully, and with great unity of

spirit in the six addresses, upon as many separate branches of the subject.

While all the addresses breathe the same object and desire, and are marked by a complete agreement in the great principles of the Gospel which bring life and salvation to the soul, it is not necessarily to be inferred that each of the speakers concurs in all the sentiments expressed by the others. This may, indeed, be the case, but each minister is only responsible for the statements made by himself, and as the addresses are the free and unrestrained utterances of Christian conviction by experienced ministers of the several great Christian bodies, they will be received as the stronger evidence of the substantial unity existing

in the Evangelical Churches. The results of this attempt to soften and heal the differences and divisions of the Lord's people will mainly depend upon the acceptance which it shall meet with from Christians generally. May all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ be taught by the Holy Spirit to feel the sacred obligation upon his redeemed people, of joining in spirit and in truth to seek for the fulfilment of His prayer.

H. F.

28, *Kensington Garden Square*,
June 18, 1868

A PUBLIC MEETING for the promotion of CHRISTIAN UNION, was held at Westbourne Hall, Westbourne Grove, on Tuesday, March 31st, 1863. The Rev. HENRY FRY, D.D., took the chair. The hall was filled with a highly respectable audience, which appeared deeply interested in the addresses. The meeting was opened by singing the hymn, commencing,

> "Jesus when'er Thy people meet,
> There they behold Thy mercy-seat."

The Rev. A. C. DAVIES then read part of the seventeenth chapter of St. John, and offered a very earnest prayer for the union of Christians, and for a blessing upon the meeting.

The CHAIRMAN said: Dear Friends,—As you are aware, the object of our meeting this evening is the promotion of Christian Union—an object of the utmost interest to all the disciples of our blessed Lord, inasmuch as we are assured that

it is, in the highest degree, conformable to his own sacred will, the addresses which will be delivered are all in connection with that general subject,—"*Union among Christians.*" I trust that the meeting will be very much blessed to all of us. I pray that God will bestow his Holy Spirit upon those who are assembled here to-night; that the great importance of the fulfilment of the Saviour's prayer for union among his people may be impressed upon all our hearts; that we may see it in its breadth and in its power; and that we may receive the truths that shall be delivered to us in a prayerful spirit, and with a desire, as far as God may enable us, each one in his own sphere and opportunity, to carry them out. Our friend, the Rev. Mr. Scott, will address you first, and his subject will be—"The prayer of our Redeemer for union among his disciples."

I.

The Saviour's Prayer for Union.

BY THE

REV. CHARLES J. SCOTT.

"That they may be one, even as we are one."—John xvii. 22.

THIS prayer is emphatically the Lord's prayer; still more emphatically so, than that prayer which we are accustomed, and correctly, to call by that name; because it is a prayer, not only dictated and composed by the Lord, but one that was actually used by him. One of the most earnest petitions of this Intercessory prayer, the great petition, the reiterated petition is, that his church, that his people, may be one.

This prayer cannot fall to the ground. It must be answered. The church of Christ will one day be really and visibly one. The kingdoms of this world will at last, become the one kingdom of the Lord and of this Christ. In this wonderful intercession the Lord not only prays

the effectual prayer of faith, as a believer might do, he prays as a divine person, saying "Father I will." His will must be done. He may suffer his purpose to be delayed for a time, but it must be accomplished at last. His wish must be fulfilled; and I trust that this meeting may prove a step towards its fulfilment.

It does not fall to my part to show wherein union consists; but as I cannot speak of union without some sort of definition of it, I may, perhaps, be allowed to say, in a single sentence, that union means *oneness*—oneness of feeling and affection—oneness of views and sentiments —oneness of action and aim. Those who regard one another with feelings of love and trust; those who are substantially agreed as to essential matters of opinion and belief, and those who aim at the same ends—are willing to co-operate in any good work, are *united*, or *at one*.

Now the unity or oneness which our Lord aims at in this prayer, that has been read to you, is of a very close and intimate description, as you may see by the prayer itself, and as you may judge by the symbols or figures employed in Scripture to represent the church. There are three, in particular, to which I would briefly refer, as illustrating the meaning of the Lord's prayer, for oneness in his church. The church is compared to the human body; it is spoken of

as a body of which Christ is the head, and believers the members. It is spoken of as a *family*, of which Christ is still the head, and believers are the members. It is spoken of as a *kingdom*, of which Christ is king, and believers are the subjects.

The first of these, the body, presents the most perfect example of oneness that can be imagined. There is diversity, there are many members, and these different members have different offices; still, all together make up only one body. And they are all useful, needful, almost indispensable to the body and to one another.

St. Paul follows out this comparison, in the 12th chapter of 1st Corinthians, showing that though all the members have not the same office, *all have* their several offices, and each is necessary to the symmetry, beauty, and well-being of the whole. So the eye can not say to the hand, "I have no need of thee." Suppose it were concluded that the hand is unnecessary, and that, in consequence, it were cut off; then the body would be maimed, the eye, the body itself would lose its chief defender. So a congregation by perversely casting off a godly, zealous man might thereby lose its right hand, and a church by cutting off a congregation of godly people might incur a similar loss. But in the human body even though there be no maiming

or mutilation, if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it, because the body is a perfectly organized whole; all its members receiving sensation and motive-power from one head and brain: and so a prick on the point of a finger is felt over the whole body. Now, if the union among the members of the church were as complete as this, if the organization of the church were as complete—then every member would be felt indispensable to every other, and the welfare of each would be the concern of the whole.

Our Lord prays that it may be so—that his church may be one, in the same sense in which the body is one—that all may have life from him, their living head, and having life from him, and love from him, they may thoroughly sympathise with and love one another.

Where ought this union to begin? In the congregation. The comparison which likens the church to the body represents union on the smallest scale, and may be taken to describe specially the union that ought to subsist between the members of the same congregation. They at least ought to be united, and feel as *one*. It is an unhealthy and unnatural state of things when Christians who sit for years in adjoining pews, join in the same prayers, listen

to the same message, and sit down at the same table, do not know each other; and, when they happen to be brought together, meet as strangers. Breaking bread together, being nourished by the same food, is a bond of union all the world over: much more ought those to be united, who partake together of that bread, which reminds them that they are one with Christ, and together receive their life from him. As St. Paul says, "We being many are one bread, one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." The members of our congregations ought to feel themselves to be one. They ought to know each other, love each other, and help each other.

There are distinctions in regard to rank and station, education and culture, which cannot be overlooked; but it would seem that these bulk larger in the eyes of Christians than they ought to do. To a Christian, no distinction ought to be so great as that of being an heir of glory and a child of God. To be the servant of the great God is true nobility. He is nobly born who is born from above. Can it be then, that any child of God can look down on, or overlook another child of God, in whom he recognises an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ; who, he sees, is a habitation of God through the Spirit—because he belongs to a different

rank in society? While, perhaps, from the holiness of this man's life, and his devotedness in working the works of God, it may be manifest that he is destined to be highly exalted in heaven. We ought to seek to "make to ourselves friends" of such, and they may one day, in turn, receive us into their everlasting habitations.

Here then ought the spirit of unity to begin to operate, in mutual love and good offices, among individual church members. Charity begins at home, but it must not end there. When it does, when our love is confined to those who belong to our own congregation or communion, we exhibit sectarianism; and that is the great enemy of union. Hence we have other similes to represent the church, suggesting unity on a larger scale than that represented by the body.

When the church is compared to a family the reference may be to the different congregations and members of the *same church*, or as we call it in the *meantime*, denomination. But as all mankind are really one family, the figure may include the whole church throughout the world: the members of which are connected both by the tie of Nature and that of Grace.

This comparison of the church to a family represents a very close and endearing description

of union. It represents Christian unity more exactly, in some respects, than the former one. The members of a well-regulated family are bound together by dutiful and affectionate regard to their common head, and to one another. Each member of this family is necessary to the happiness of all the rest. None can be spared from the family circle. It is a complete whole, and each one is necessary to the happiness of the others. If one, in Providence, be taken away by death, the only thing that can really reconcile the survivors to the stroke, is the hope of meeting again in a happier world. We may be reconciled to a local and temporary separation. A son may be compelled to leave the family circle, and wander in distant lands, but no distance can prevent his thoughts and affections wandering homewards; and the thoughts and sympathies of all who are at home follow him in all his wanderings; they watch for letters from him, and, at last, with intense joy, welcome him home.

When the Lord prays that his people may be one, he prays that they may be such a united family, that they may seek to keep together; that when separated they may not cease to love each other; that they may look forward with desire to a re-union, and earnestly strive to bring it about. And why should this not be

realised among Christians even now? Are they not brethren in the highest sense, having one Father, one elder Brother, one in-dwelling Spirit, one table, one *home*—certainly in Heaven—why not on earth!

How are we to recognise these our brethren? By the family likeness which all the children acquire on their adoption into God's family—holiness, love, conformity to the will and image of God. "Grace be with all those who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity."

This family feeling ought to be felt and manifested by the entire family of the faithful, especially by those who belong to the same portion or branch of the church. But what if they are not all one in heart? What if believers are externally united to persons with whom they have no sympathy of feeling and sentiment, in regard to matters of essential importance? It must be plain, that the union, said to subsist between such parties, is a mere pretence. In order to a real union, between those who are members of God's family, there must be a previous separation from those who are not of that family. "If any man love *not* the Lord Jesus Christ, he is none of his." If an alien intrude into this holy family, and begin to sow discord and falsehood, he must be cast out. "The wisdom that cometh from above is *first*

pure, and *then* peaceable." Union and love are beautiful and attractive in themselves, but they are good and desirable only when found in harmony with truth. In the apostle's well-known enumeration of moral excellencies we have first, "Whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure;" then, "Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report." Before any branch of the Christian church can become truly one, it must become, as far as possible, pure and scriptural.

But the Lord aims at a still more comprehensive unity—one which will unite all the different branches of his church in one. This is indicated by his comparing his church to a kingdom—the kingdom of God, or of heaven on earth. The apostle John, in interpreting Caiaphas's unconscious prophecy concerning Jesus, shows that it intimates that "he was to gather in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." He has ever since been engaged in gathering them together to his kingdom in heaven, where they are manifestly one: but a time is coming, as I said before, when they will be visibly one on earth.

Even now Christ has but one kingdom on earth, if his people could be only brought to recognise the truth. The unity exists, but it is not recognised. Satan has striven hard to make

Christ's kingdom a kingdom divided against itself, which cannot stand. He has divided this kingdom into small sections, and set them to fight with each other, in that sort of warfare which is called *controversy*, and which is sometimes as unchristian as actual warfare with the sword. Had not our Divine king counteracted Satan's efforts, the church would have been overthrown long ago.

But now a different spirit prevails in the church. Christians have begun to see the folly and wickedness of controversy, carried on by brethren, concerning secondary points. They are beginning to enter into the spirit of the Lord's intercessory prayer, and to attend to the earnest exhortations of the apostles to seek the things that make for peace, and avoid the tendency to divide and separate. For the first time since these warnings were given, Christians are trying to agree and unite, instead of trying to withdraw and separate from each other. Those who know and love the Lord are beginning to know and love each other. The lines that separate between different bodies of Christians are becoming fainter, and soon we may hope to see many of them obliterated entirely; to see, under our one King, one kingdom; under our one Shepherd, one sheepfold.

This is what our Catholic-spirited Chairman has been labouring for. He has already originated a *ministerial union*, in which Episcopalians, Moravians, Wesleyans, Independents, Baptists, and Presbyterians are represented. We have already had two delightful social meetings at his residence, where we have had opportunties of becoming better acquainted with each other, of drawing closer the bonds of brotherhood. In future, we are to have our monthly breakfasts in a larger and more public room. These ministerial meetings have led to a larger gathering of the friends of union, at the house of another zealous promoter of the cause; at which it was resolved that we should have united *open-air services*, in which ministers, and others belonging to different denominations, are to take part together; not only availing themselves of each other's assistance, but presenting to the world the spectacle of practical unity. This large and successful meeting is another fruit of the ministerial union. In short, the agency is now in operation which may, through God's blessing, ultimately lead to the visible union of all the Evangelical churches. In the meantime, we love and trust each other, and have begun to co-operate. Some years ago there was a phrase in general use, intended to give expression to the principle of union—"Co-operation

without incorporation." This saying is good so far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. I think Dr. Guthrie improved on it, when he rendered it—"Co-operation *unto* and *until* incorporation." Let this be our aim.

II.

The Nature of Christian Union.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM CHALMERS, M. A.

THE subject allotted to me is the nature of Christian union — *i.e.*, of union among Christians. You have had your attention directed to the importance which our Lord himself attached to it; for every one who considers that most solemn and high-priestly prayer — our Lord's intercession upon earth — a pattern of his intercession in the heavens — every one who thinks how large a place the union of his people occupied in that sublime communion of the eternal Son with the everlasting Father, must be satisfied that there is hardly any subject which ought more to commend itself to the hearts of his people. Wherein then does union among Christians consist? And first of all, the root of it — that out of which it springs — that which demands it — and that without which

it cannot possibly exist—is personal oneness with Christ. Each individual believer's personal union with the Lord Jesus Christ, as his living and life-giving Head, is the foundation for all other kinds of union. Men may join together avowedly for religious purposes in little circles, in larger societies, *in* Christian churches, and *as* churches, but their union is real and Christian, only in so far as they are individually and severally united to the Lord Jesus Christ, by faith in Him divinely wrought, and by the gift and in-dwelling of His Spirit in their hearts—the Spirit of life and love. That I say is the foundation of the Christian union which we desire and aim at. From this union of each individual believer to the Lord Jesus Christ by faith and love, there follows next, as a matter of course—whether they know it and recognise it or not—their union with each other. The Lord, in consequence, regards all his people as one; and he constantly describes them, though consisting of a multitude that no man can number, under figures which most strongly express the closest and completest unity. He calls them one church, though they are a thousand churches—He speaks of them as one family, though composed of ten thousand scattered families—as one household, though setting down at a thousand tables and gathering

round a thousand different hearths — as one body, though composed of ten thousand members—as one temple, though built of innumerable stones—and as one vine, though covering all ages and nations with its spreading branches. And why are they thus, though so many, described as one? Just because they have the same common relation to God the Father, to Jesus the Saviour, and to the Holy Ghost the Sanctifier. They have the same faith in him, the same love to him, the same dependence on him, the same loyal subjection to his authority, and a community of life, feeling, affection, and enjoyment with him. This it is that binds them all together, however widely scattered, and of whatever differing character, graces circumstances. Hence you find the Apostle saying to the Ephesians—"There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all." This is a principle of union so deep and so extensive, as to render a thousand principles of separation comparatively feeble and inoperative, and to link Christians more closely together than any differences of opinion and practice can possibly dissever them. They thus all become like the branches of some gigantic tree. Some of these branches are

strong, and others are weak; some are great, and others small; some wave aloft high in the air, and others trail upon the ground; some are in light, and some in shadows. But having all of them fellowship with the one life-giving stem, they have fellowship one with another—fellowship with their kindred branches, long as the tree shall live and the stem, and they shall be together. There is then a substantial union amongst all living Christians,—a solid, real oneness, in virtue of their common relation to God and to the Saviour; a union that can never be dissolved in any case until the soul is severed from Christ. Christian union is thus, in the first instance, a thing inward and spiritual, in heart and soul—in a mind enlightened by the same truth, a heart renewed by the same Spirit, and affections that fasten upon the same grand centre. But if this be the inmost principle of Christians, what is its external expression? How is it to be manifested?—for our Lord prays rather for the manifestation of the union than for its reality. How is it to be manifested? I say, in one word, by love—love to the brethren, and by all that love dictates and can do. It is by love that Christ has manifested his union with us; and it is by love that we must manifest our union one with another. There is a love which all men owe to all men; and Christ would have

his people distinguished by the largeness and generosity of the affection which they cherish towards the whole family of man. But the common union of all believers to Christ demands that they should love one another, with an affection peculiar to themselves. He would have them love as believers in Christ, as disciples of Christ, *because* they are believers and disciples. I must love all men; but to every man whom I regard as a real living Christian, I owe love because he is a Christian—one whom my Master loves, and one who loves my Master. And this is the love of brotherhood as distinguished from the love of the species. This is the love we bear to the household of faith as distinguished from the love which we bear to mankind. It is such love as this which is required of us in those familiar texts: "Walk in love, even as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us." "Seeing that ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth, through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another out of a pure heart fervently." "Let brotherly love continue." "A new commandment I give unto you"—as if the Lord would break the high repose of the Divine law by fresh legislation—"a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." And as if he dwelt

with delight upon the thought of this new commandment in his farewell discourse, he said, "This is *my* commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you." Such precepts as these enforce that brotherly love which is the genuine and legitimate expression of Christian union.

What is this love? It is the love of those who are partakers of a common salvation with ourselves. How do men grasp hands and embrace each other, and rejoice and weep together, when they have been unexpectedly delivered from some imminent and deadly peril; and can one who has been saved by grace fail to feel lively interest in all who have been plucked by the same hand from the same ruin? What is this love? It is the love of those who belong to the same family. Should we not deem ourselves unnatural, indeed, if we were cold-hearted or devoid of affection towards our own flesh and blood?—members of the same family—who had sprung from the same stock, and drawn their life from the same source—who, ere they saw the light of day, had lain close to the same heart—who, when they were born, had been fed from the same bosom, and been dandled on the same knees, and been cherished with the same tender affection and sleepless care; and as they advance in life, are pro-

tected by the same arm, guided by the same wisdom, supplied by the same bounty, and made to taste the sweetness of the same deep and constant love. And are we not all "BRETHREN IN THE LORD," if we are Christians? "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." All sons are brethren; and all who are the sons of God must, in their very sonship, become to one another brethren.

What is this love? It is the love of those who possess substantially the same elements of character; for there is a family likeness among the children of God; and likeness you all know is the mother of love. When men think and feel alike—when they speak and act upon the same principles, are impelled by the same motives, and pursue the same ends, are not their hearts naturally drawn to each other? And is not that the case with all true Christians? They are those who are devoted to the same great interests, and engaged in the same high calling. They are all on God's side, while the rest of the world are rebels. They are reconciled and friends, whilst others are alienated and rebels. They are all warriors in the same holy war, and they are all travellers to the same heavenly home. What is this love? It is love on account of the image which they bear. Some traces

of that image are imprinted in their birth, and he who loveth him that begot, loveth him that is begotten. Surely in all this there is foundation and plea enough for the tenderest, the most constant and the holiest affection amongst all Christians. And this love will show itself in every way that love dictates, and by doing everything through which love ordinarily manifests itself. There will be good-will in the highest degree, moral esteem, ready acknowledgement, tender sympathy. If we love the brethren, in the true spirit of Christian union, we shall never be ashamed to own them as brethren. When the world despises or condemns them, we shall stand up for and own them, and bear with them the reproach of Christ. We shall choose them as our companions, and we shall delight in all such associations as call into exercise whatever is peculiarly Christian in their character. Instead of envyings and and jealousy, we shall recognise their gifts and graces as the workmanship of the Divine hand, rejoice in them as if they were our own, and hail them as a precious contribution to the spiritual wealth of the church of God. When their reputation is assailed, we shall defend them, and in their joys and sorrows, we shall sympathise with them. To the utmost extent of our power we shall seek to promote their holi-

ness and comfort, and delight to hold communion with them in Christian ordinances. We shall read the Word together, pray together, praise God together, yes, and sit down together at that table, which is the table not of this man or that man, of this church or of that, but which is the table of our common Lord, where he presides and breaks to us the bread of life. Who am I that I should refuse to sit down at the supper of the Lord with any whom the Master invites, and whom he condescends to eat with at his own table. In a word we shall delight to co-operate with fellow Christians as far as we can, in all enterprises which have for their object the promotion of the common interest, and the advancement of the kingdom and glory of our common Master and Lord. It is in such ways as these that the real union of Christians is to show itself by love to the brethren, and by all that love dictates and can do—a love deep and warm in proportion as my brother is like my Master, loves Him fervently, serves Him diligently, honored to do His work.

To such an exhibition of Christian union it is not necessary that my fellow Christian and I should belong to the same church, or that we should be at one on all matters of opinion and feeling. One with me, on all points essential, he cannot fail to be, if he is a Christian. I may

indeed, regard him, or he may regard me as very defective in knowledge of divine truth. In my view he may express himself upon various heads of Christian doctrine in a very unsatisfactory way; and he, in turn, may be persuaded that I am in error. We may differ very widely upon things that are by no means unimportant in themselves; but in all things that are essential we shall infallibly be at one, if we are true and living Christians. Much is made of the differences that exist among Christian churches—denominations as they are called—but when I look at them, what do I see? I find that there is a substantial unity of opinion upon everything that directly affects personal Christian character. Taking the leading denominations into which Protestant Christians are divided, what are the questions that divide us—which range us into churchmen and dissenters,—Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Wesleyans, Baptists? They are questions, I grant, by no means unimportant; but then they are questions such as these. Not—How a soul is to be saved. By no means; but how is the church of Christ, as a community, to be governed? by bishops, presbyteries, congregations, or conferences? Or how is the ministry of the gospel to be supported—by state endowments, or by the voluntary contributions

of the members? Or when and to whom is the ordinance of baptism to be administered—to infants, or to adults only? These questions are far from being unimportant. They bear directly upon and the purity and the progress, upon the stability the extension of the church of Christ, things which should be dear to the hearts of all; and, therefore they are questions to be examined by the light of God's word, and to be decided by every man's understanding and conscience, for the regulation of his conduct in regard to the church to which he ought to belong,—very fitting questions, therefore, on which Christian men may agree to differ, and connect themselves with different Christian churches accordingly; but none of them are questions which interfere with a man's standing in Christ, or with personal religion and holiness of heart and life. They are questions on which we must differ, if we would be loyal to the Saviour. All of us, whatever our disagreements may be, acknowledge but one standard of faith and practice—the written Word of God; and interpreting that Word according to the best light which our poor faculties can bring to bear upon it, in patient and prayerful study, we can hardly fail to differ; but we are bound to respect one another's conclusions though at variance with

our own, as no less loyal to conscience, taught by the Word of God, than are those which we ourselves have been constrained to adopt. Indeed, I can see that the man who differs from me, and belongs to another church, may be more loyal to conscience and to Christ than the man who agees with me, and worships with me; for the man who agrees with me may have derived his opinions and adopted his practices from custom, from education, from his fathers, and not from the loyal submission of his understanding and conscience to the authority of Christ in his Word. Such differences, therefore, springing it may be out of that very loyalty to the Saviour, which is the first characteristic of a Christian, ought all the more to endear to me the brother who differs from me. On all great points the brethren before you are at one. Ask us all—"What is the ground of a sinner's hope?" We shall with one voice exclaim, "Other foundation can no man lay, save that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus!" Ask us what is the burden of life? We answer, "Sin." Ask us what is our relief? We say, "The blood and righteousness of Christ." Ask us what is our dearest refuge in trouble? We tell you, with one soul, "the throne of grace." What are our chief enemies? The same, "the world, the flesh, the devil." Who are our chief

friends? The same—a "reconciled God, an incarnate Saviour, a sanctifying Spirit." What are our happiest and most heavenly moments? "Those when our consciences are purged by the blood of atonement, and our wills subdued, and our hearts warmed by the love of God." And what is our most fervent desire? "That we may be holy in life and be for ever with the Lord at death." These are the things which go to form the elements of personal Christian character, and to secure the salvation of souls; and however we may differ upon questions relating to the church of Christ as a community, we are at one, not only spiritually and in heart, but really in conviction and in practice upon all essential points, upon all that is necessary to constitute us *real*, I do not say, *perfect* Christians. I grant that there are more church organisations than there ought to be, and in our days we have seen the union of bodies of Christians, that ought never to have been separated, and we expect to see more. But those who complain so much of the external divisions of the church of Christ, often do not understand wherein its real union consists, and I believe often mourn the most because they cannot get all men to think with themselves. I am not sure that so much harm has been done by men agreeing to differ, and separating because they

cannot harmoniously work together. In such separations, there need be no schism, nor is there any if there is no alienation of affection. Of this I am sure, that those very differences afford wider room for the exhibition of Christian union than outward agreement does. Our Lord says, "If ye love them that love you what thank have ye?" and on the same principle it may be said—"If ye love them that agree with you what thank have ye?" There is wider room for the exercise of the brotherly love which we call for, when it has to be exercised in regard to those who differ from you on what you deem not unimportant points, when you have to recognize the Christianity of such, and, believing them to be loyal and devoted followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, are ready to hold out to them the hand of brotherly love and to join with them in Christian fellowship. I am not disposed to think, that the time is approaching when all differences in the church of Christ will be done away, and all separations come to an end. That can never take place till there is unity in the faith. Now, although all means and ordinances are given for that purpose by God, he gave "some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of

Christ, till we all come, in the unity of the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,"—still that perfect harmony is, I believe, reserved for a higher and a happier day. Just as the perfection of the Christian is not reached till he passes from earth to heaven, so I take it that that blessed consummation, when the church will reach the highest standard of perfect unity, will not arrive till the church on earth passes into the position of the church that is above. Until that *time* arrives, never let Christians forget that the oneness of the sustaining Head and quickening Spirit, should ever prevent difference of opinion from being occasions of division. Rather let it be made the source of a thousand gentle sympathies, reciprocal duties, and offices of love.

MR. CHALMERS prayed as follows:—

O gracious God, we thank and bless Thee for Thy gracious purposes towards our poor and wretched world; for the unspeakable gift of Thy dear Son, in whom Thou art gathering, into one, all things that are in heaven and upon the earth. We thank Thee for that prayer of His which Thou didst listen to, which Thou didst register in the book of Thy remembrance, that His people might be one. O grant, gracious God, times of refreshing from Thy presence. Grant, gracious Saviour, that by the abundant outpouring of Thy Spirit on the Churches, this glorious consummation may be hastened. Holy Father, we thank Thee for that blessed union which Thou art pleased in Thy condescension to establish between Thyself and us; and O grant that we may see in, and recognise the union of all whom Thou lovest, and of all who love Thee. May we feel that every living Christian is a brother, and belongs to us as we to him; and let brotherly love prevail. Lord fill the hearts of all with it. We mourn before Thee the coldness and the alienation which has so often divided those who are yet loyal disciples and devoted followers of Jesus. Grant that this may disappear, and that,

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III.

The Origin and Causes of Disunion.

BY THE

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That there are divisions amongst such is patent to all the world,—that these divisions do infinite harm to the cause of Christ, no one will venture to deny,—and that they are entirely

opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, and of Him whose title is "The Prince of Peace," every Christian man will readily allow.

Now I have been asked to say a few words, this evening, about the causes of these divisions. I may as well say, at the outset, that I shall not attempt to particularize these causes of disunion. Indeed, it would be impossible to do so in the few minutes allotted to me. Nor do I think that it would be altogether wise to attempt it, even if I had the time. We have not yet attained that state of perfection which raises a man above the possibility of mistake. The sun of righteousness, though high in the heavens, has not reached his meridian. The Millenium has not yet dawned. Shadows—some longer, some shorter,—still obscure our view of persons and things.

What one man deems a trifle, seems to another man a grievance. That which to one man seems to be no cause for division, is in another man's eyes the exact opposite. To attempt, therefore, to particularize the causes of disunion, would not, in my judgment at least, at all advance the cause which, I am sure, we all have at heart, viz.—the manifested union of all who "love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and in truth."

Instead, then, of going into *particulars*, I

shall confine myself to-night, to *generals;* and I do this the more readily because, as I firmly believe, the real causes of division are not to be found in comparatively unimportant questions (unimportant, I mean, in the sense of non-essential to salvation), such as the Union or Separation of Church and State—Infant or Adult Baptism—whether the Church shall be governed by Bishops, by Presbyteries, by Assemblies, or by Conferences,—but are to be found rather in something far deeper than these, viz.,—in the innate corruption and depravity of man's heart.

First of all, then, I would say—though, in doing so, I may tread a little on ground already occupied by my friend Mr. Chalmers—that nearly all the causes of disunion amongst Christians are traceable to a confusion—in some cases wilful, in other cases unintentional—of two things, which are essentially different—Unity and Uniformity.

In God's works in nature we find Unity—a beautiful plan, a wonderful order runs through all—is traceable in all; but there is no Uniformity: there is no discord, there is no antagonism; on the contrary, there is the most perfect harmony; everything is just where it ought to be—does just its own proper work—brings just its own measure of glory to God,—

but with all this there is no sameness. Were there sameness—were there uniformity, all our pleasure, all our happiness—nay, our very life, would be gone for ever.

So it is in the Church of Christ. God's people are distinct and diverse as the billows; but they are one as the sea. They are many members, yet are they but one body. Unity there is, then, in Christ. Harmony there will also be amongst the members of Christ's body, in proportion as the Spirit of Christ is imbibed by them; but Uniformity there will not—there cannot be, until the Lord himself come to reign.

We may long for the day when all who love Jesus will see eye to eye, and have no differences. We do well to pray for the coming of that day—but we do not well to expect—still less do we well to attempt to enforce uniformity *now*. It cannot be. Nay, so far as we can see, God's work would not be done so well as it is now done, were it to be. To attempt then, by pains and penalties, to compel my brother, who holds the Head equally with myself—though in minor points he does not see eye to eye with me,—to attempt, I say, to compel my brother to worship God in the same place and with the same forms as I worship Him, and to observe all the ceremonies which I observe, is

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The second point which I would notice (and after all, it lies at the bottom of the one to which I have already called your attention), is this—that all the causes of disunion amongst Christians may be summed up in one word—*Pride*. Pride brought about man's fall in the garden of Eden. Man wished to be as God—was not content to hang upon God for all his supplies. Pride has deluged the world with blood, and covered it with her slain. And pride has given rise to all those fierce and unholy controversies which have alienated one from the other those who are the habitation of the same Holy Spirit; have washed their robes and made them white in the same precious blood; and are expectants of the same pure and glorious and eternal home.

We are so apt to think of ourselves as superior to others, and knowing more than others: we are so ready to say to a brother—"Stand by, for I am holier than thou," that it requires no little grace, and not unfrequently a great many most painful lessons, to makes us feel that after all others are just as dear to Christ as ourselves—are just as needful to the well-being of the body of Christ as ourselves, aye, and it

may be, will hereafter occupy a higher place in heaven than ourselves.

How beautiful the words of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, in the fourth chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians! After showing us our oneness with Christ, and earnestly exhorting us to manifest this oneness by "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," he says in the fifteenth and sixteenth verses—"Speaking the truth in love, grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted,"—how? by that which *one* joint supplies? No; "by that which *every* joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love."

In *Mark* ix. 38, John comes to Jesus and says, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." Mark the pride which crops out in these words. John does not say, because he followeth not *thee*—but because he followeth *not us*. How different this to the spirit breathed by Paul in the very chapter to which I just now referred you—"I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, for-

before you in the speech before last. The one is *spiritual* and heavenly—the heart to the Lord as the branch to the vine. The other, and the higher degree springs from it, and is the *outward* union of love — that love which binds our hearts together, which casts a mantle over much imperfection in each other, which bears one another's burdens and so fulfils the law of Christ, which leads us to deal kindly with one another, to esteem each other better than ourselves, and to seek to glorify God—not in word only, but in deed. Now I believe that this is practicable. I believe it to be very possible with all except those who choose to insulate themselves in the Christian Church by some idea of a prior standing, ecclesiastically or doctrinally. I believe this idea of Christian union to be perfectly compatible with the earnest conscientious holding of minor things. Though belonging to different sections of the church, how thoroughly we appear one at the Throne in prayer, and in the vineyard at work. As the spokes of a carriage-wheel, coming from different parts of the circumference, join in one centre, seem separated when the vehicle is still, but one when the wheel is turning with great velocity; so Christians of different denominations, earnestly working together and standing together, as we purpose doing, in open-air services, appear all one in

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to their soul's welfare. In the present day there are certainly some circumstances that demand watchful attention on behalf of all intelligent Christians. There is an unprecedented readiness to hear the Gospel. My heart often sinks within me when I remember the frequent Sabbath services which I have attended during the past winter in the different theatres in this metropolis — always crowded by an audience as silent and as eager as that which I am now addressing; and it seems to me that if we had had just three or four times the number of services, we should, in the same, or even a larger proportion, have multiplied our attendants. The audiences never asked whether the minister was a Churchman or a Dissenter. They came to hear about Christ; to know how souls might be saved. They came to be convinced of their state as sinners in the sight of God. And I believe it is a fact, turn your attention to what portion of this land you may, that the same signs will meet you everywhere.

Now then, if ever, this is the time when those to whom God has given the power and the opportunity to speak should, with unsealed lips, testify to their fellow-men of the grace that saves. Now is the time to stand forth and let our neighbours know, that if we cannot meet in-doors, we will meet out of doors; we will meet some-

where to let those around us know that we are earnest in the determination to bring our fellow-men to the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a time also of great spiritual influences. The influence of the Spirit of God has been passing through the land. Though men of the world despise and ignore the recent revivals of religion, we think not the less of them on that account. Some of us know their reality and their worth, and have seen such numerous instances of conversion in them, that we are compelled, by one common thrilling sentiment of gladness, to forget denominational distinctions. Have you ever noticed, in times of great celebration, how friendship is born in a crowd—how marvellously men, under some surprising instinct of patriotism, forget in an instant the different grades of life in which they move, and will grasp the hand, or speak without introduction? And so assuredly it ought to be in a time of spiritual privilege and influence. We ought, animated by the common feeling of gratitude and joy, to go forth with one heart and voice in the midst of the service of our common Redeemer and Master. Yes, the times are favourable; blessed are they who have wisdom to discern the opportunities that are given of serving the Lord Christ. And as for those differences that remain, if we are followers of the Lamb, we shall shortly have to pass

through that narrow stream whose detergent waters will remove the last vestige of difference, and shall step into that pure region where we can say, without misgiving of heart or faltering of tongue, "We are all one in Christ Jesus."

VI.

How to Fulfil the Saviour's Prayer for Union.

BY THE

REV. HENRY FRY, D.D.

DEAR FRIENDS,—It now remains for me to address you on the sacred obligation of our Lord's prayer upon all Christians, and on the means by which we can contribute to its fulfilment. And first, no one can doubt that we are all called upon, not only by our love for the Lord Jesus Christ, but by our desire for the redemption of the world, to labour earnestly for the union of the Lord's people, as one of the most sacred principles of the Gospel. If our Lord has prayed that his people may be one, that by their unity the world may be convinced of his truth, our divisions must be not only ungrateful disregard to his

will, but a great hindrance to the Gospel. If his church was intended to be a blessed family of holiness and love, delivering mankind from the corruption and degradation of sin, and by its unity convincing the world of his divine truth, then beyond doubt our divisions tend to counteract the whole purpose of God in his kingdom upon earth.* That such is the case the condition of mankind clearly proves—while the church was at unity in itself, and unbelievers were constrained to say, "see how these Christians love one another," the gospel prevailed, and the world felt its divine spirit and power; but, now, our divisions are the reproach of the Gospel, and so far from convincing the world by our unity we supply unbelievers with an excuse to pacify their con-

* "It is clear that our divisions form a chief hindrance in the way of the world's conversion." "Missions to Jews and Gentiles are all weak from the same cause. The concentration and combination of all Christian minds and hearts in the conversion of our fallen race to God thus becomes impracticable, and thence our efforts have but partial and limited success. Baxter says, 'thousands have been drawn to popery, and confirmed in it by the divisions of Protestants, and I am persuaded that all the arguments in Bellarmine, and all their other treatises, have not been so effectual to make papists in England as the multitude of sects among ourselves.' The Papists appeal to it with a vain and self-complacent triumph."—*E. Bickersteth, evils of division.*

sciences for neglecting the Redeemer. They endeavour to believe that they cannot be condemned for rejecting a religion apparently so uncertain in its teaching, that unable to unite those who embrace it in the same worship and service it only engages them in opposing and condemning each other.

It is in vain to reply that evangelical Christians are substantially one in spirit and in faith, the world will not estimate their unity by examining their creeds but by their outward conduct and practical relations towards each other, and as long as they remain disunited and separate, men of the world will never acknowledge them to be one body in Christ Jesus. Alas, how little do Christians feel the effect of their divisions in dishonouring, discrediting and weakening the Gospel, and how regardless are we of our practical and absolute obstruction to the Lord's prayer, in continuing year after year without any serious effort to remove the causes of our divisions, which is plainly the only real means of effecting Christian union.

If we consider the history of the church we shall be struck by the fact, that in all ages Christians have been fully conscious of the sin and evil of schism or division, but that the means by which they laboured to maintain and

restore unity were the actual causes, not only of separating Christians, but of inspiring them with mutual hatred as persecutors of each other, and as enemies of God and of his Gospel whose destruction seemed a religious duty. It is hard to believe that men in seeking to promote the Gospel and Christian union, should have so completely violated its spirit and divided the church; but the fatal cause is easily found in their departing from the comprehensive simplicity of the primitive church, and enforcing uniformity in rites and opinions not prescribed by Scripture or in the apostolic age. In the primitive church the requisites for membership were such an acknowledgment of the common principles involved in accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as were afterwards embodied in the Apostles' creed, "they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." No evil was more dreaded than division, and nothing can be more evident than the anxious care of the apostles to fulfil the Saviour's prayer, and preserve the unity of his body; but so far were they from requiring obedience to one precise system of rites and opinions, that they earnestly besought and commanded the Lord's people not to judge one another, nor deprive of their Christian liberty brethren in Christ, agreeing in the

same faith, but differing in matters not included in the great saving principles of the Gospel. Thus only could union be preserved, for once admit the right of any portion of the church to impose upon others their own opinions, respecting rites and observances or minor matters of doctrine, and it is plain that the exercise of such a right must produce a schism as soon it demands obedience to an ordinance deemed by a portion of the Christian body to be opposed to Scripture and to conscience. Not so when the terms of communion are the common articles of Chistian faith accepted by all the evangelical Churches, for while a denial of any of these must render fellowship impossible, all Christians must feel that separation upon subjects comparatively unimportant and often merely upon different forms of expressing the same faith and the same worship, must be a needless and sinful violation of the Lord's prayer.*

* Bishop Stillingfleet says, "will Christ ever thank men at the great day for keeping such out from communion with his church to whom he will vouchsafe crowns of Glory? There were great diversities of practice and varieties of observance among Christians in the apostolic times, but the Holy Ghost never thought those things fit to be made matter of Laws, to which all parties should conform. All that the apostles required as to these, was mutual forbearance and condescension

The comprehensiveness of the apostolic church, in including in its fellowship and unity Christians differing exceedingly in opinion and ordinances is seen in the judgment of the of the apostles and of the church respecting Jewish converts. What should we think in the present day of a congregation with half its members observing the Jewish rites of circumcision, the passover, clean and unclean meats, the Sabbath, and all the sacrifices of the law of Moses? How would it be possible to preserve unity among Christians so completely opposed not only in their religious, but social customs? Yet such was the condition of the Church in the only period when it was blessed with unity, and reflected the Saviour's truth and glory. With our ideas of uniformity, what should we think of the bishops and ministers of every town in England drawing up, whenever they thought proper, liturgies, or forms of public prayer, for their congregations? We should be ready to conclude that such license would destroy all

towards each other in them. The apostles valued not *indifferences* at all, and those things they accounted such, which whether men did them or not, was not of concernment to Salvation. Without all controversies, the main inlet of all the distractions, confusions, and divisions of the Christian world, hath been by adding other conditions of church communion than Chirst hath done."—*Preface to* "*Irenicum.*"

agreement, order, and unity; yet is it certain that this was the practice in the primitive churches, and that by such freedom and comprehensiveness, the spirit of division was restrained, and true Christian union preserved.*

Earnestly and humbly would I appeal to those devout clergymen and servants of Christ who regard the Apostolic Church as our best model, and who seek for the restoration of primitive ordinances as the only means of healing divisions, to consider whether all the Lord's people are not called upon to pray for and seek, as the divine basis of union, such a constitution of the Church as was approved by its inspired founders, rather than to perpetuate disunion, by condemning and living separate from brethren whose consciences cannot accept every prescription of the uniformity now required, but who would have been in the primitive church one with them in faith, and in the worship, and service of Christ. We have great causes of thankfulness and hope. One is, the

* "All bishops had liberty to form their own liturgies. Thus, for instance, though there was but one form of worship through the whole church as to what concerned the substance of Christian worship; yet every bishop was at liberty to form his own liturgy in what method and words he thought proper, only keeping to the analogy of faith and sound doctrine."—*Bingham Orig. Eccl.*, B. II., ch. vi., s. 2.

complete agreement in the confessions of faith, and declarations of doctrine and worship, professed by the great bodies of Evangelical Christians,—the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, Wesleyans, and Church of England, not only in the essential principles and truths of the Gospel, but on very many subjects upon which there was no such agreement of opinion in the primitive churches.* The other ground of hope is, in the experience so sorrowfully gained of the futility and sinfulness of attempting to effect union by penalties, coercion, or any exercise of human authority; and the necessary consequence, that the union prayed for by our Lord must be attained by the free drawing together in heart, and in the worship and service of Christ of all who hold

* Socrates says, "In short, you will scarcely find anywhere, two Churches which agree exactly in their ritual." He fills several pages with an account of the different usages in the primitive orthodox Churches, some even rejecting particular books of Scripture, and observes—B. V. c. 22—"Differences existed in the first ages of the Church, as was known to the Apostles themselves, as the book of the Acts testifies. For when they understood that the peace of the believers was disturbed by a dissension of the Gentiles, they met together and promulgated a law by which they liberated Christians from the bondage of formal observances, teaching them the path of true piety, and only prescribing such things as were conducive to it."

those great doctrines of Salvation which have ever attached his people to himself as one redeemed body of sanctified believers.*

* Such was the desire of the Reformers even at a period when the Christian mind was still influenced by the Romish principle of seeking to enforce uniformity. "We ought," says Luther, "to give thanks to God that we (the Lutherans and Waldenses) are brought near together, and gathered into one fold under one Shepherd. Let us remember that all the rites and observances of all the churches never have been, or could be, uniform and alike, for the circumstances and varieties of men and of times do not permit it; only let the doctrine of faith and morals be preserved, for this ought to be the same, as Paul often admonishes, '*Speak all the same thing*,' saith he, '*that ye may with one voice glorify God*.' I beg that men would call themselves—not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? Why should it happen to me, poor corruptible food for worms, that the disciples of Christ should be called after my abominable name? Be it not so, beloved brethren! but let us extirpate party names, and be called Christians, for it is the doctrine of Christ that we teach." Melancthon, in a letter to the Waldenses, says:—"As we agree respecting the chief articles of Christian doctrine let us embrace each other with mutual love. Nor ought dissimilitude and variety of rites and ceremonies to disunite our affections." Calvin, writing to Farell, says, "that the peculiar forms or opinions of the reformed churches were no just causes of division." Cranmer and the English reformers "gladly hailed the reformed churches abroad as their brethren," and invited them over to aid in the English Reformation, and in preaching in the universities

To impose upon others our own system and forms is, in reality, to assume the authority of Christ, and to set aside his gracious and comprehensive salvation by confining the true church to those who agree with us in complete uniformity. Alas! how much of human pride lies concealed under a supposed zeal for the Lord's truth, when we thus take upon ourselves to condemn and exclude his people and violate his loving prayer! What shall be our feelings when at his right hand we meet those whom we have cast out on earth—when we shall sit down in his presence with thousands of glorified believers whom we would have counted it a sin against our church to have knelt with at his table and communion on earth. Surely if regret can then be felt, we shall deeply lament our divisions, so unworthy of the spirit of our Lord's Gospel, and so fatal in obstructing the salvation of souls! Beyond doubt, among the blessed spirits there is but the one desire that Christians may be one on earth as they will be in heaven, and that every obstacle to the Lord's prayer may be removed; shall we not then strive to realise that heavenly rest when all our divisions and distinctions will cease, and be deplored? and shall we not in spirit, looking unto our dear Lord and Head, pray earnestly that he will take away from us the spirit and

sin of schism or separation, and draw us together in the bond of love and peace, into one body in Christ Jesus.

Have we any sufficient excuse before our Lord for continuing disunited, and for not seeking to fulfil his prayer? Nothing but a paramount necessity or absolute duty can justify disregard to the Saviour's injunction, and to the heavy responsibility upon our consciences of obstructing the Gospel in convincing mankind. If we look at the world lying in wickedness, if we reflect upon the objects we most anxiously desire and pray for as Christians, we shall see that our divisions strengthen every evil and impair all our hopes and efforts for good. And if we look into our own hearts how injurious has been the influence of our divisions, constantly fostering vain glory and spiritual pride, keeping us from the fulness of love which we should feel for all the brethren in Christ, and it may be, disquieting us, or those who are dear to us, with distressing doubts and controversies.

There is a feeling in many minds that association in religious works and services with Christians of other denominations implies disregard and indifference to the peculiar truths and advantages, which we suppose are especially attached to our own communions, and this specious objection to Christian union

misleads many into actual opposition to the Lord's prayer under a semblance of zeal for his truth. Let us consider what is the Church —"our Church"—and who are our brethren in Christ Jesus? Are all those who profess uniformity with us, and call themselves members of the communion to which we belong,—one with us in spirit and faith? No one can affirm this, for while professing the same faith, and forms, and name, we see in the same church ministers and members holding the most opposite views, even from close agreement with Romanism to complete Neologianism and denial of the atonement and inspiration of Scripture,—two great principles on which our souls especially rest, the one as the ground of our salvation, the other as the assurance that we have that foundation of our hope revealed to us by God himself. Now, if no outward confessions and forms can of themselves secure unity even in the first principles of the Christian Church,* and if we see ministers and children of God in other communions adorning the doctrine of Christ in all the fruits of the Spirit, surely we are opposing every Gospel influence

* The excessive ritualism of the Jewish Church could not secure unity or prevent the Sandhedrim and priesthood from being divided between the opposing sects of Pharisees and Sadducees, while on the contrary, the

as well as the prayer of our Lord when we would set aside the blessed company of his believing people as his true Church in which our souls should find communion, and the enjoyment of all spiritual exercises, to limit our love, our co-operation and sympathy to a body whose uniformity is not necessarily more than an outward profession.

But why should we feel attachment to our own communions? Is it to offer incense to our own pride in ascribing superior spiritual discernment and advantages to those whose judgments agree with and confirm our own, or is it because we love them as brethren in Christ, heirs with us of his glory? Few of us will confess the former cause of zeal for our own church and name, yet it would be well to cleanse our hearts from all influences of a feeling so adverse to the mind of Christ: but if we love our own communions for the Lord's sake and not for our own glory, then why should not all who are as much his beloved and chosen as are the members of our own communion, be

most complete unity is found to exist under diversity of forms, as in the Wesleyan communion, a most united body, each congregation of which exercises the liberty of using, at the discretion of the members, the Liturgy or extemporaneous worship.

equally dear to us and equally one with us? Surely, one spiritual look to the comprehensive love of Christ for his catholic church redeemed to himself, out of every name and nation, should extinguish the narrowness and exclusiveness of soul, that can confine its sympathies to one little part of the great and blessed company whose glory it should be to surround their Lord in one undivided fellowship of love and joy and peace.

Can it be said, that those who have loved to unite with Christians of other communions have been indifferent to the interests of their own churches; so far from this being the case it will be found that the only true and spiritual ground of attachment to our own communion necessarily interests us in all other Christian churches. We are members one of another, portions of the same great company or army, and to seek only the well-being or success of the small body with which we are immediately connected, would be faithlessness to our common head and the great object of our united service. Those who have laboured most for Christian union and whose hearts have been most enlarged for all the brethren and churches of the Lord will be found to have been most blessed in their own communions, and to have left names

honoured as lights and examples in their churches.* Our judgment of our brethren who have gone before us, differs from our estimate of those in our own time. Present contentions assume an importance with which we can never invest the controversies that have passed away. We look back on holy men of old, and we ask them in the judgment it may be of heaven, why

* A long list of illustrious names will suggest itself to the members of each of the Evangelical churches, of those eminent men of God in their respective communions whose souls sorrowed over the divisions of the Lord's people, and who prayed and laboured for Christian union. I adduce two examples:—

"I met," says John Wesley, "several serious clergymen. I have long desired that there might be an open, avowed union, between all who preach those fundamental truths, original sin and justification by faith producing inward and outward holiness. But all my endeavours have been hitherto ineffectual. God's time is not fully come." Journal, March 16, 1764.

Wednesday, September 22, 1790, Journal:—"Mr. Hay, Presbyterian Minister, of Lewensmead meeting, came to desire me to let him have the use of our preaching house on Sundays, at those hours when we did not use it ourselves, while his house is rebuilding. To this I willingly consented."

"When our differences are so insignificant," says Chalmers, "why keep up any difference at all? We agree in all that is essential, our differences then must be, the non-essentials of Christianity, for I would say, substantially speaking, nine-tenths of the people in Britain have all the same creed.

id ye so bitterly contend with one another or things of little moment? Why, as under a carnal mind, did ye separate yourselves from your brethren, taking no heed to your Lord's prayer and common redeeming love for you all? Blessed are the peace-makers, and in the record of the Lord's saints, no names shed so sacred and attractive an influence for the glory of the Gospel and the love of man as those who have mourned over the divisions of Zion and sought to draw together all the brethren in Christ into unity under his headship.

In the worship and service of our Lord, personal feelings are swallowed up in the pre-eminent object of glorifying the Redeemer and saving souls. Who that realises the eternal condemnation of our fellow sinners, unless saved by faith in Christ, can withhold his sympathy and co-operation from every spiritual exercise for the conversion of the ungodly o the careless? If we really value and enter wit spiritual earnestness into the services of o own churches it must be, not for the mere sa of repeating our forms and addresses, but the inestimably great results and objects seek through them, and for the same reason must value and bless all the spiritual serv of our brethren of other communions desi to attain the same blessed ends.

If I might venture to adduce my own experience, I should say that full participation and enjoyment in the extemporaneous worship of other churches is quite compatible with the highest appreciation of the liturgy. For while I have always esteemed it a privilege to unite in extemporaneous worship with Christian brethren of other communions, so deeply did I feel the general blessing to the congregation and people involved in the church services, that in a parish containing three churches and requiring as many Sunday services, it was my constant practice for many years, without any assistant minister, to read the morning service daily and to administer the communion weekly, though neither was required, or indeed practised in the other churches of the diocese. I am persuaded that the clergymen who are led to seek Christian union and the glory of the Lord in religious services with brethren of other communions will be found among those who most highly prize the liturgy and most fervently fulfil its services.

It is a striking fact that those who attach themselves simply and exclusively to the Divine Word for direction, respecting the constitution and worship of the Church, are led to enlarged and spiritual views of the Lord's Kingdom, so that it is unjust to impute to a supposed uncer-

tainty in scriptural teaching those divisions which have rather resulted from departing from the apostolic system under the influence of principles and in pursuit of objects dictated by state policy, or by the spirit of ecclesiastical domination*.

If any thing, then, can add to the degradation and oppressiveness of our divisions, it is that they remain, as a burthen upon Christian consciences imposed upon the Church, with the unworthy design of injuring our religion in order to promote Romanism, or to carry out

* This is very evident in the history of the English Church. In the first years of Elizabeth's reign, all Protestant Christians lived together in unity as one body, under a comprehension allowing liberty of conscience to those who agreed generally in the same faith and worship; but the Queen and her successor (James), assuming similar authority in the English Church to that of the Pope in the Romish Communion, by enforcing uniformity to their opinions, not only caused, but compelled conscientious men to separate from the church This deplorable evil was completed by the Act of Uniformity, established under the secret and avowed Romanists, Charles II., his brother James, and other Papal converts, with the design of dividing the Church England, by compelling many hundreds of ministers leave her communion, and so promoting the interest Romanism by weakening the Established Church, by forming a great body of Nonconformists, among whom Romanists might be included in a general toleration.

principles disavowed by all Christians and Churches as unscriptural and tyrannical.*

And now the question presents itself, whether we shall any longer abide in disunion. The Lord has been long drawing his people together

* We find this fatal principle of State supremacy in spiritual things—the cause of persecution and division—thus laid down in the second canon of the Church of England,—"Whosoever shall affirm that the King's Majesty hath not the same authority in causes ecclesiastical, that the godly Kings had amongst the Jews and Christian Emperors of the primitive church, let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, nor restored until after his repentance and public revocation of those his wicked errors." It is to be apprehended that many of the bishops and clergy are absolutely excommunicated by this canon for holding "a wicked error," now, I suppose, universal, since few would maintain that our monarchs possess the absolute domination over the ministers and doctrines of the church exercised by Constantine and his successors. Although the clergy of the Church of England are not required to declare their assent to the canons, ecclesiastical judges affirm that they have the force of law upon all clergymen. How far this decision affects conscience and the principles of truth and consistency in the ministers of religion, and thereby the credit and character of the clergy and of religion itself in the estimation of men of the world, is a serious consideration. It was thus Locke estimated their conscientiousness. "The clergy readily complied with the Act of uniformity; for you know that sort of men are taught rather to obey than understand; and to use that learning they have to justify, not to examine what their superiors command."—*Locke's Works*, IV. 540.

by a loving providence, setting before them Gospel institutions and works so blessed, so eminently proceeding from himself, that the strong spirit of sectarianism has been overcome, and believers of every name assemble as brethren on the same platform. Such are the Bible Society, and the many missions to the heathen, and institutions for the instruction and relief of the poor, from which to hold back is felt to be disregard to the call of the Lord. But is it not equally evident that his chastening dispensations would also correct our sin of disunion, and that the enemies of the truth and corruptors of the people, assailing the gates of of Zion, should compel us, by the general danger, to lay aside our divisions. It is not only Romanism, or an ungodly world, but men from the bosom of the church itself have arisen, in the pride of intellect and learning, to overthrow our Evangelical religion, as having failed to produce union among Christians, and therefore being partial in its influence and unable as a great comprehensive moral system, command the obedience, and effect the improvement and elevation of the human race.

Can we any longer put aside or postp the consideration of Christian union? S we wait till Romanism and infidelity, diff in the institutions for instruction of the yo

and even for the ministry itself, as well as through the popular literature, shall have undermined the faith of the people in the revelation of the Redeemer? If we remember that he himself hath declared, that by our union is the world to be convinced, it can scarcely be denied that the most urgent necessity is laid upon us, at the present time, to unite together, that the world may know that the Gospel is the power of God to salvation. Above all, are the rulers and ministers of the church under deep responsibility upon this subject. It is easy to discharge ordinary offices required as duties, and rewarded with approbation, but spiritual men must consult the will and obey the voice of their Lord; and how can they enjoy peace in their own souls, or expect the Divine aid and blessing, if they confine their service to what is agreeable to their own will, and allow all the evils dependant upon disregard of their Lord's prayer, to continue increasing from year to year?

And now let us consider how we can personally and individually promote this great object. (1st.) Let us seek Scriptural convictions respecting the actual sin of ourselves, and the whole church in abiding in a condition condemned by our Lord, and causing the triumph of Satan in the weakness and reproach of

the Gospel. If we estimate Christian union truly we will not be satisfied with such an approval of it, and desire for its attainment as shall lead to no real effort to promote it. This is only to incur the condemnation of knowing to do good and doing it not. If we are sincere we will view the question in communion with our Lord himself, and enter into a covenant in spirit no longer to neglect his prayer. Although no grace or blessing would so enrich and strengthen our souls and the whole church as our becoming one believing body in Christ, and as to dwell among united Christians is a high and soul-strengthening privilege for a believer, so the spiritual and even temporal well-being of each communion is bound up in the life and devotion diffused through, and practically exercised by, the general church; yet is it certain that we need, under deep convictions, a great awakening to this heavy responsibility upon us for Christ's sake to heal our divisions. As the evil has grown up under all the bad influences of Satan working in the pride of our carnal hearts and the vain-glorious policy of the world, so we cannot expect to unite the disjointed family of Christ by a few expressions of opinion, or resolutions of assemblies. It may be said of the spirit of separation, so inbred and long indwelling in

the habits and institutions of Christians, that it can only be cast out, as it were, by prayer and fasting. The truth is, the divisions of Christians could only have arisen in a low condition of spiritual life and in the prevalence of ecclesiastical pride and worldly policy in the general church, and so before it can be overcome, the standard of love and devotion in the Christian life and spirit must be greatly raised, and the distinction between the life in Christ and the selfishness and pride of this world be more felt and realized by the Lord's people.

(2.) Let us then seek, by Divine grace through earnest prayer, to root out of our own hearts that miserable sectarian pride and spirit of exclusiveness and separation, so adverse to the mind of Christ, and to the influence of the Gospel of love and lowliness of mind. To the feeling rising within us to say to a redeemed soul, a child of our God, and a brother in Christ, "depart from me, or I will not be one with thee, for I am holier than thou, or I have more truth in my system than there is in thine"—let us present the picture of Jesus washing his disciples' feet, and praying that they may love one another and be one in him, so as not to dishonour his Gospel, and tempt the world to despise and reject it. Let us cultivate brotherly love, and as the prevailing sin is always the

most dangerous and the most to be avoided, so let us most carefully cleanse our hearts from the spirit of estimating the Lord's people by any other standard than their faith and godliness—their love for Christ, and their love for the brethren.

(3.) We are taught in Holy Scripture that God has given to the church ministers, ordained by prayer and religious institutions, and set apart in all the congregations for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. We are also commanded to know them that labour among us, and are over us in the Lord and admonish us, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and to obey them that have the rule over us, and submit ourselves, for they watch for our souls. This would seem to teach us that one design of our Lord in giving ministers to his people was to keep them in the unity of the faith, and to prevent their being tossed to and fro as children with every wind of doctrine; nor can this institution be invalidated by the present imperfection of ministers, for in its full power, under the apostles, there

were differences and even contentions between Paul and Barnabas and Paul and Peter. It becomes us then to reflect how far division is fostered by neglect of the divine command respecting the Christian ministry, and how far young and ardent spirits, novices in the faith, are tempted to separate themselves and become leaders of parties, by the general habit of undervaluing the ministerial office. Surely it becomes all humble and loving disciples, applying the Divine word in its plain and simple power to their souls, to consider whether it can be said of them as attached members of congregations, that they are obedient, and that they submit themselves to those who minister among them as ruling over them, and admonishing them in the name of the Lord. Human pride may revolt under this teaching as humiliating, and explain it away, but it stands as the word of the Lord by which we shall be judged and our obedience tested at the final account, and we have good reason to doubt whether we are right in the sight of God if this important precept and principle be disregarded by us. It will be found that the pride of heart which leads to separation and disunion is similar to the feeling which induces us to think slightingly of the Christian ministry, and to regard it only in its human character and aspect. Speaking

the truth, as I believe it to be in the word and in the will of Jesus, I am bound, without any regard to the prevailing highmindedness of the present age, to testify, that unless we cultivate the spirit of submissiveness to sacred institutions —the desire to bring down every thought into humble fulfilment of all the duties and observances prescribed to us by our Lord, under the power of the great principle, "working out our salvation with fear and trembling;" we shall not see the long desired blessing of Christian union realised in our day. Nothing so retards success in religious undertakings as considering it so easy and so certain, that it may be counted upon as a matter of course, inducing us to disregard the strength of the evil to be removed or overcome, and to neglect the spiritual and temporal means of effecting our object. May our heavenly Father fulfil in our hearts our Redeemer's prayer, and not only give us an earnest desire for Christian union, but enlighten and strengthen us to discern and adopt the true spirit and means of attaining it.

(4.) If we take upon us, in obedience to the Lord's Prayer, the Divine work of seeking to heal our divisions, it becomes us, as makers of "the Lord's peace," to be very loving and gentle, apt to entreat, and showing consideration for all who differ from us, always attributing to

them the best intentions. We may increase and embitter our divisions, even while seeking to heal them, if we exhibit the spirit of condemning those who will not join with us, and set ourselves up as animated by a superior sense of charity and more enlightened views of Christian union. The progress of the spirit of union will depend upon the manner in which it is advocated and sought, and upon the harmony and love united to increased power in the Christian services of those who cultivate Christian unity. The world and a large portion of the Christian public regard the attempt as hopeless, and consider that all associations of Christians of different communions will certainly be broken up by sectarian interests and feelings. We should have this fully in mind, to render us watchful and careful to keep alive the love of Christ in our hearts—the only principle which can subdue the spirit of pride, leading to disunion. United prayer-meetings and all other exercises which draw together Christians of various churches, should be regarded as high privileges and opportunities for cultivating brotherly love and obtaining blessings to the Lord's glory. The feeling, that in joining in these we are promoting the fulfilment of the Lord's Prayer, will, in itself, give a sacred importance to such engagements. Let us, then,

very earnestly support every good work which draws together the Lord's people of every name. We need not wait for definite schemes for the immediate union of Christians; they will, in their own time, arise under the Lord's hand as his people are prepared to receive them. It is our part, as individual Christians, to open our hearts to the love of the brethren, and to reply to the Saviour's prayer, repeated to us by the Spirit which brings the words and will of the Lord home to our souls, that, under grace, we will labour earnestly for peace and union and good-will among men. It is the cause of our blessed Redeemer, and of a world of immortal souls, against the adversary, the Devil, the author of pride, jealousy, envy, and all the bad principles which separate brethren. Let us then impress it upon our hearts as a dear service of our Lord, and ever before the Throne of Grace join with our spirits in the loving prayer of Jesus, that all his redeemed on earth may be one, as he and the Father are one, that the world may know that the Father hath sent him, and hath loved them as he hath loved him.

Now let us pray:—

O Lord, our heavenly Father, the giver of all good, Thou hast promised Thy Holy Spirit to them that ask Thee. O, our Lord, grant that Thy Spirit may now influence all our hearts to praise and bless Thy holy name, and to seek Thy grace to do Thy will. May our Saviour's prayer be engraven so deeply on our hearts that it may be continually rising up before our minds, and animating us to pray and seek for Christian union. Oh, our Father, draw together thy children to love one another; deliver us all from the sectarian spirit, and make us one in Thine adoption of us all as dear children! When Thy people of various churches meet together, O Lord, bless them, and make their union a joy and delight to their souls. And bless us now, and strengthen our feeble efforts, and encourage our hearts, and grant that great good may result from this meeting, and from this attempt to unite in the name of thy dear Son. Attach us, O our God, more closely to our blessed Head, and give us the spirit of earnest longing to work out His holy will. Let Thy glorious Gospel, without which, we

should be lost and dead, be more and more precious to us, and have more power over our souls and bodies, that we may live, magnifying Thy name and praising Thee with joyful hearts in a service of united love, for our blessed Redeemer's sake. Amen.

The Doxology was then sung, and the meeting separated.

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